

Buena Vista Furnace
500 yards W of Pennsylvania Hwy. 56,
North bank of Blacklick Creek
Armagh Vicinity
Indiana County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-265

HAER
PA.
32-ARM.V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

ADDENDUM TO
BUENA VISTA FURNACE
W. of State Highway 56,
N. bank of Blacklick Creek
Armagh vicinity
Indiana County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-265

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Washington, DC 20001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BUENA VISTA FURNACE

HAER
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32-ARM.V
1-4

HAER No. PA-265

Location: At "Dias," 500 yards West of Pennsylvania Highway 56 on North bank of Blacklick Creek, Brush Valley Township, Armagh Vicinity, Indiana County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: New Florence (1:24000)
UTM: 17/664500/4482700

Date of Construction: 1847

Builders: Henry McClelland, Elias B. McClelland, and Stephen Alexander Johnston

Present Owner: Historical & Genealogical Society of Indiana County

Present Use: abandoned

Significance: In operation for only a short time, the Buena Vista Furnace is representative of an economically precarious industry undertaken by many entrepreneurs in the region.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Richard Quinn, Historian

DESCRIPTION: The Buena Vista iron furnace on the north side of Blacklick Creek at the crossing of the Armagh-Indiana road (now Pennsylvania Highway 56), survives in fair condition. The large pyramidal stone furnace measures 32' square at the base, tapering to 22' square at the top; the furnace is 30' high. The principal, or work arch, is located on the south side facing the creek; smaller tuyere arches are located on the east and west ends. The charging bridge was located above the north wall. The bosh probably measures about 9' in diameter. The structure is deteriorating; the northwestern corner had collapsed by 1968, and the two tuyere arches are severely weakened.

Vegetation, though cleared away some years back, is again encroaching upon the stack, and poses some threat.

HISTORY: Henry McClelland, Elias B. McClelland, and Stephen Alexander Johnston obtained a deed in 1847 to roughly ninety acres of land on Blacklick Creek between Armagh and Brush Valley. The Buena Vista Furnace was named for the Mexican War battle. The partners evidently chose the site for the furnace because they were speculating that a railroad would be constructed along Blacklick Creek, connecting Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. This rail line was promoted in 1845, but was never built. By 1847 the partners controlled 421 acres and were operating a store.

Due to the failure of the railroad proposal, the poor quality of local iron ore, and a decline in the price of pig iron, the furnace failed. In 1850 the sheriff seized the property and sold it. The furnace may have operated another two years, but it apparently closed by 1856. J.P. Lesley states that in 1854, it made 560 tons of metal out of shell and bog ore from nearby measures.

The land was acquired by the Lackawanna Iron and Steel Company in 1901, whose successor, the Delano Coal Company, held it until 1957. That year a 5.16 acre tract was conveyed to the Historical & Genealogical Society of Indiana County, which still has the property.

Sources:

Lesley, J.P. *The Iron Manufacturer's Guide to the Furnaces, Forges and Rolling Mills of the United States, with Discussions of Iron as a Chemical Element, and American Ore, and a Manufactured Article, in Commerce and Industry.* New York: John Wiley, 1859.

Stephenson, Clarence D. *Buena Vista Furnace.* Marion Center, PA: privately published, 1968.